**[4] The Hysterical Proton Pseudos[[1]](#footnote-1)**

We have seen that hysterical compulsion originates from a peculiar kind of Qή motion (symbol-formation), which is probably a. primary process, since it can easily be demonstrated in dreams; [and we have seen] that the operative force of this process is defence on the part of the ego, which here, however, is performing more than its normal function [p. [352](http://www.pep-web.org/document.php?id=se.001.0399a&PHPSESSID=hp2utlh566g2adrf07vska5152#b014)].[[2]](#footnote-2) We need an explanation of the fact that in the case of an ego-process consequences follow to which we are accustomed only with primary processes. We must expect to find special psychical determinants here. We know from clinical evidence that all this only occurs in the sexual sphere; so perhaps we shall have to explain the special psychical determinant from natural characteristics of sexuality.

Now, as it happens, there is a special psychical constellation in the sexual sphere which might be of service for our purpose. I will illustrate it (it is known to us empirically) by an example.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Emma is subject at the present time to a compulsion of not being able to go into shops alone. As a reason for this, [she produced] a memory from the time when she was twelve years old (shortly after puberty). She went into a shop to buy something, saw the two shop-assistants (one of whom she can remember) laughing together, and ran away in some kind of affect of fright. In connection with this, she was led to recall that the two of them were laughing at her clothes and that one of them had pleased her sexually.

The relation of these fragments [to one another] and the effect of the experience are alike unintelligible. If she felt unpleasure at her clothes being laughed at, that must have been corrected long ago, ever since she has been dressing as a [grown-up] lady. Moreover, it makes no difference to her clothes whether she goes into a shop alone or in company. That she is not simply in need of protection is shown by the fact that, as happens with agoraphobia, even the company of a small child is enough to make her feel safe. And there is the quite incongruous fact that one of them pleased her; it would make no difference to this either, if she were accompanied. Thus the memories aroused explain neither the compulsion nor the determination of the symptom.

Further investigation now revealed a second memory, which she denies having had in mind at the moment of Scene I. Nor is there anything to prove this. On two occasions when she was a child of eight she had gone into a small shop to buy some sweets, and the shopkeeper had grabbed at her genitals through her clothes. In spite of the first experience she had gone there a second time; after the second time she stopped away. She now reproached herself for having gone there the second time, as though she had wanted in that way to provoke the assault. In fact a state of ‘oppressive bad conscience’ is to be traced back to this experience.

We now understand Scene I (shop-assistants) if we take Scene II (shopkeeper) along with it. We only need an associative link between the two. She herself pointed out that it was provided by the laughing: the laughing of the shop-assistants had reminded her of the grin with which the shopkeeper had accompanied his assault. The course of events can now be reconstructed as follows. In the shop the two assistants were laughing; this laughing aroused (unconsciously) the memory of the shopkeeper. Indeed, the situation had yet another similarity [to the earlier one]: she was once again in a shop alone. Together with the shopkeeper she remembered his grabbing through her clothes; but since then she had reached puberty. The memory aroused what it1 was certainly not able to at the time, a sexual release, which was transformed into anxiety. With this anxiety, she was afraid that the shop-assistants might repeat the assault, and she ran away.

It is quite certainly established that two kinds of ψ processes are mixed up together here, that the memory of Scene II (shopkeeper) occurred in quite a different state from the other one. What happened can be represented thus [[Fig. 16](http://www.pep-web.org/document.php?id=se.001.0281a#g016)]:

[Fig. 16]

![[Fig. 16]]()

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Of these, the blacked-in ideas1 are perceptions which are also remembered. The fact that the sexual release too2 entered consciousness is proved by the otherwise incomprehensible idea that the laughing shop-assistant had pleased her. The outcome-not to remain in the shop alone on account of the danger of assault-is quite rationally constructed having regard to all the pieces of the associative process. However, nothing of the process (represented underneath3) entered consciousness except the element clothes; and thought operating consciously has made two false connections in the material at its disposal (shop-assistants, laughing, clothes, sexual feeling): that she was being laughed at on account of her clothes and that one of the shop-assistants excited sexual pleasure in her.[[4]](#footnote-4)

The whole complex (unblacked-in [circles])[[5]](#footnote-5) is represented in consciousness by the one idea clothes, clearly the most innocent one. Here a repression accompanied by symbol-formation has taken place. The fact that the outcome-the symptom-is then quite rationally constructed [see above], so that the symbol plays no part in it, is in point of fact a peculiarity of the case.

It might be said that it is quite usual, as happens here, for an association to pass through unconscious intermediate links until it comes to a conscious one.[[6]](#footnote-6) In that case, the element which enters consciousness is probably the one that arouses special interest. In our example, however, it is noticeable precisely that the element which enters consciousness is not the one that arouses interest (assault) but another one, as a symbol (clothes). If we ask ourselves what may be the cause of this interpolated pathological process, only one presents itself-the sexual release, of which there is also evidence in consciousness. This is linked to the memory of the assault; but it is highly noteworthy that it [the sexual release] was not linked to the assault when this was experienced. Here we have the case of a memory arousing an affect which it did not arouse as an experience, because in the meantime the change [brought about] in puberty had made possible a different understanding of what was remembered.[[7]](#footnote-7)

Now this case is typical of repression in hysteria. We invariably find that a memory is repressed which has only become a trauma by deferred action. The cause of this state of things is the retardation of puberty as compared with the rest of the individual's development.

**Section Citation**

Strachey, J. (1950). Project for a Scientific Psychology (1950 [1895]). *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume I ( 1886-1899): Pre-Psycho-Analytic Publications and Unpublished Drafts*, 281-391

1. [These words are in Latin script here in the MS., but in Greek script at the beginning of the next section. This arrangement has been reversed in Anf., 432 and 435, prints both headings in Greek script. The term occurs in Aristotle's Prior Analytics (Book II, Chapter 18, 66a, 16), a work dealing with the theory of the syllogism which was later included in what came to be called the Organon. The chapter deals with false premisses and false conclusions, and the particular sentence asserts that a false statement is the result of a preceding falsity (‘proton pseudos’). Andersson (1962, [195-6](http://www.pep-web.org/document.php?id=se.001.0399a&PHPSESSID=hp2utlh566g2adrf07vska5152#b001)) has, however, shown that a Viennese physician, Max Herz, used the same term in a similar context in a paper read by him before the neurological section of a scientific congress in Vienna in 1894. Of this section Freud was then the secretary. (Cf. a letter to Fliess of February 7, 1894, Anf., 91, Letter 16.)] [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. [In the MS.: ‘welche aber hier mehr leistet als normal’. Anf, 432, inserts a ‘nicht’ before the ‘mehr’ (‘is performing no more’). There is no sign whatever in the MS. of ‘nicht’, which is in any case contra-indicated by the sense.] [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. 2 [Emma figures prominently in unpublished sections of the Fliess correspondence (cf. Schur, 1966).] [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. 4 [‘False connections’ had been discussed at length by Freud in his case history of Emmy von N. See Studies on Hysteria (1895d), Standard Ed., 2, [67-70](http://www.pep-web.org/document.php?id=se.001.0063a&PHPSESSID=hp2utlh566g2adrf07vska5152#p0067) n. Elsewhere in his early writings the term is more often used specifically of displacement of affect, e.g. in the first paper on the neuro- psychoses of defence (1894a), Standard Ed., 3, [52](http://www.pep-web.org/document.php?id=se.001.0037a&PHPSESSID=hp2utlh566g2adrf07vska5152#p0052)] [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. 5 [In the MS. ‘lichtgehalten’. Anf., 434, alters this to ‘gebrochene Linien’ (‘broken lines’).—Incidentally, this is a striking example of the use of the word ‘complex’ in the sense of a repressed group of ideas, whose introduction is usually attributed to the Zurich school. See an Editor's Note to a paper of Freud's on legal proceedings (1906c), Standard Ed., 9, [100-2](http://www.pep-web.org/document.php?id=se.003.0085a&PHPSESSID=hp2utlh566g2adrf07vska5152#p0100).-Cf. also footnote 2 on p. 149 above.] [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. 6 [This sentence does not read quite grammatically in the MS. and has been re-arranged in Anf., 435, as given above. There is no question about its meaning.] [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. [The hypothesis stated in this sentence (which is discussed in the two following sections) governed Freud's views on the aetiology of hysteria throughout this early period. He examined it shortly after writing the present work in a long footnote to his second paper on the neuro-psychoses of defence (1896b), Standard Ed., 3, [166-7](http://www.pep-web.org/document.php?id=se.001.0157a&PHPSESSID=hp2utlh566g2adrf07vska5152#p0166), where further references will be found. The whole idea had the ground cut from under it by the discovery a year or two later of infantile sexuality and the recognition of the persistence of unconscious instinctual impulses. Nevertheless, the notion of the ‘deferred action’ of a trauma did not lose its whole validity, as is shown by a footnote to the ‘Wolf Man’ case history (1918b), Standard Ed., 17, [45](http://www.pep-web.org/document.php?id=se.011.0001a&PHPSESSID=hp2utlh566g2adrf07vska5152#p0045) n] [↑](#footnote-ref-7)